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Utility Winter Prices

Concord, N.H. Customers of Liberty Utilities, New Hampshire Electric Cooperative and Unitil who buy the electricity they use from their utility rather than from a competitive energy supplier will see higher prices for that electricity this winter. "Prices for the electricity portion of the bill, referred to as energy service or default service on a customer's bill, are increasing this winter," according to Amanda Noonan, Director of the Commission's Consumer Affairs Division. Residential customers of Liberty Utilities can expect to see, on average, an increase in their total bill of approximately 47% while residential customers of Unitil should expect to see, on average, an increase in their total bill of approximately 44%. Customers of NHEC can expect to see, on average, an increase of approximately 12% in their total bill¹. The main cause of these price increases is the high cost of natural gas delivered to New England in the winter months, creating higher prices for the region's gas-fired electric generation plants and sometimes resulting in the use of more expensive generation sources.

"The Commission recognizes the burden that these increases will place on the budgets of residential customers over the next few months," said Amanda Noonan. Noonan also noted "There are steps that customers can take to help manage their bills this winter." The Commission encourages customers to call their utility and ask about energy efficiency options that may be available to help lower their electric bills. Simple conservation measures can also help reduce electric use and can potentially save money. Tips on how to conserve are available on the utility websites and the Commission's website, puc.nh.gov. Customers should also call their utility to ask about a budget payment plan to help spread the higher costs out over a 12 month period.

"Residential customers who are not currently purchasing their electricity from a competitive supplier may want to consider the various offers from the suppliers registered to do business in New

¹ Unlike Liberty Utilities and Unitil who procure energy service for their customers through a competitive bid process for a six month period, NHEC has a number of longer term contracts with staggered end dates and so this winter's higher prices have a smaller effect on the NHEC's energy service rate.

Hampshire,” recommends Noonan. While competitive suppliers are also affected by higher winter prices, they may offer energy supply products with terms longer than six months, helping to spread the higher winter costs out over a longer period of time. Suppliers may offer a fixed price service or they may offer a variable price service. “It’s important for customers to look at an offer carefully to make sure the terms of the offer are right for the customer and will provide savings,” says Noonan. “For customers receiving assistance from the Electric Assistance Program, the discount provided under this program will not apply to the electricity purchased from a competitive supplier. Before choosing a competitive supplier, those customers should look carefully at their bill to determine what the savings will be and whether those savings will make up for the loss of the discount on the energy portion of the bill.” For more information on what to consider when considering a competitive supplier, please visit the Commission’s website, puc.nh.gov, and select Questions about Choosing a Competitive Supplier from the Consumer Interests section.

There are a number of resources available to assist eligible households with their electric utility bill.

- Electric Assistance Program - A bill discount program available to customers of Liberty Utilities, Unitil, New Hampshire Electric Cooperative and PSNH. For more information and to apply for the program, please contact your local Community Action Agency.
- Fuel Assistance Program – A federally funded program also known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program provides assistance with home heating costs. Customers with electric heat are eligible for the fuel assistance program. For more information and to apply for the program, please contact your local Community Action Agency.
- Neighbor Helping Neighbor – Provides assistance with electric and natural gas utility bills for customers of Liberty Utilities, Unitil and PSNH. For more information and to apply, please contact your local Community Action Agency.
- Project Care – Provides assistance with electric utility bills for customers of New Hampshire Electric Cooperative. For more information, please contact New Hampshire Electric Cooperative.

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